

OCTOBER 27, 1976

THE U.S., RHODESIA AND THE GENEVA CONFERENCE

ANNCR:

THE GENEVA CONFERENCE ON ACHIEVING MAJORITY RULE IN RHODESIA IS BEING WATCHED WITH INTERESTED CONCERN HERE IN THE UNITED STATES. VOA NEWS ANALYST GEORGE PALSEY HAS THESE OBSERVATIONS:
VOICE:

ONLY A FEW WEEKS AGO -- IN EARLY SEPTEMBER -- VIOLENCE WAS INCREASING IN SOUTHERN AFRICA. THE BREAKDOWN OF NEGOTIATIONS BETWEEN BLACK NATIONALISTS AND THE WHITE MINORITY GOVERNMENT IN RHODESIA HAD LED TO STEADILY MOUNTING GUERRILLA WARFARE. RHODESIAN PRIME MINISTER SMITH WAS SAYING THAT ANY BLACK MAJORITY RULE WAS FAR IN THE FUTURE -- CERTAINLY NOT WITHIN THE TWO YEARS ENVISIONED IN BRITAIN'S PLAN FOR LEGAL RHODESIAN INDEPENDENCE. AND EVEN MODERATE LEADERS AMONG RHODESIA'S NEIGHBORS WERE SAYING, RELUCTANTLY, THAT FORCE SEEMED THE ONLY SOLUTION.

THE SITUATION HAS CHANGED ENORMOUSLY SINCE THEN. THE SMITH GOVERNMENT HAS ACCEPTED THE PRINCIPLE OF MAJORITY RULE WITHIN TWO YEARS. MR. SMITH AND RHODESIAN BLACK NATIONALIST LEADERS ARE NOW IN GENEVA, UNDER BRITISH SPONSORSHIP, ABOUT TO BEGIN TALKS ON HOW TO ACHIEVE THAT GOAL. CONSIDERING THE YEARS OF INTRANSIGENCE AND DEADLOCK, THIS IS A REMARKABLE SITUATION.

THE UNITED STATES, OF COURSE, ALONG WITH BRITAIN, WAS INSTRUMENTAL IN BRINGING ABOUT THE CHANGE. SECRETARY OF STATE KISSINGER'S EFFORTS (OPT) -- HIS VISITS TO AFRICA IN APRIL AND SEPTEMBER, HIS TWO EUROPEAN MEETINGS WITH SOUTH AFRICAN PRIME MINISTER VORSTER, AND HIS INTENSIVE TALKS WITH LEADERS OF THE "FRONT-LINE STATES", AND WITH MR. VORSTER AND MR. SMITH (END OPT) -- ALL WERE PART OF AN INITIATIVE THAT THE UNITED STATES WAS UNIQUELY ABLE TO TAKE. BUT THE BREAKTHROUGH HAS BEEN

ACHIEVED. THE U.S. AGREES COMPLETELY WITH AFRICAN VOICES THAT SAY AFRICAN PROBLEMS MUST BE SOLVED BY AFRICAN PEOPLE.

BY THIS TIME, IT MUST BE OBVIOUS THAT THIS COUNTRY STEPS NO SPHERE OF INFLUENCE IN SOUTHERN AFRICA. AND TO MAKE THAT DOUBLY CLEAR, SECRETARY KISSINGER SAID JUST RECENTLY THAT THE UNITED STATES IS "Meticulously staying away" FROM INDICATING ANY PREFERENCE AMONG THE BLACK NATIONALIST LEADERS OF RHODESIA.

ALL THIS IS NOT TO SAY THAT THE UNITED STATES HAS LOST INTEREST. IT TOOK THE INITIATIVE IT DID BECAUSE OF THE EXTRAORDINARY DANGER TO AFRICA AND THE POSSIBILITY OF BIG POWER INVOLVEMENT. AND DESPITE THE SHARP DIFFERENCES ALREADY EVIDENT IN GENEVA, THE U.S. IS CONFIDENT ALL PARTICIPANTS KNOW THAT AGREEMENT ON ACHIEVING MAJORITY RULE IN RHODESIA IS ESSENTIAL TO PEACE AND TO FUTURE ECONOMIC PROGRESS. THE UNITED STATES IS NOT ACTIVELY INVOLVED IN THE GENEVA CONFERENCE, BUT IS, OF COURSE, VITALLY INTERESTED IN ITS SUCCESS. WHEN THE CONFERENCE HAS DECIDED ON THE TRANSITION TO A ZIMBABWE GOVERNED BY THE MAJORITY OF ITS PEOPLE, THE UNITED STATES WILL BE PREPARED TO TALK ABOUT ECONOMIC AND OTHER RELATIONSHIPS. THE U.S. IS WATCHING THE GENEVA CONFERENCE FROM A DISTANCE, BUT WITH INTERESTED CONCERN, WELL AWARE OF THE DANGERS OF FAILURE, AND THE PROMISES OF SUCCESS.

IAH/JS/SV/RCS